

PROVIDER COVID-19 MEETING – Frequently Asked Questions

May 11, 2021

| QUESTIONS | | ANSWERS |
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| 1 | How have mask guidelines changed now that more people are vaccinated, COVID cases in the community have improved, and after CDC's more relaxed guidelines? | <p>The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (DPH) has updated and relaxed its mask guidelines and requirements consistent with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and California Dept of Public Health (CDPH), with exceptions in specific situations, as noted in the resources below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NEW DPH webpage to explain what you can and can't do, updated to align with CDPH mask guidance (When you've been fully vaccinated) and associated PDF document. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o More relaxed masking guidelines would apply to all SAPC's non-congregate settings (prevention, DUI, outpatient, intensive outpatient, Opioid Treatment Program, outpatient withdrawal management, recovery services, etc), with the exceptions noted in the linked document above. o More relaxed masking guidelines would NOT apply to SAPC's congregate settings (residential, residential withdrawal management, Recovery Bridge Housing, inpatient) because these are still considered higher-risk settings where it is not possible to differentiate between those who are or are not vaccinated, either for clients or visitors. As a result, there may be interactions with unvaccinated individuals from more than one household in these settings, which is why masks are still required. - The Los Angeles County DPH mask webpage has also been updated: http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/acd/ncorona2019/masks/ - I Am Not Fully Vaccinated. When Do I Need to Wear A Mask? (NEW resource) - In all instances, physical distancing and other reasonable precautions (handwashing, etc.) should still be practiced in all SAPC provider settings. |
| 2 | Can agencies once again have visitors and/or overnight passes in residential and other congregate settings, including Recovery Bridge Housing (RBH)? | <p>Yes, but practices must continue to be consistent with DPH guidance. This means that masks between clients and visitors, regardless of vaccination status, will still be required because residential and other congregate settings are still considered higher-risk settings where it is not possible to differentiate between those who are or are not vaccinated, either for clients or visitors. As a result, there may be interactions with unvaccinated individuals from more than one household in these settings, which is why masks are still required. Physical distancing and other reasonable precautions (handwashing, etc.) must also continue to be practiced.</p> |
| 3 | Is there updated guidance on quarantine requirements for new admits? | <p>Quarantine requirements after suspected exposures depends on vaccination status:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Unvaccinated individuals are <u>required to quarantine</u> after suspected exposure. - Fully vaccinated (14 or more days after either the second dose of a two-dose vaccine series [Pfizer or Moderna] or after the only dose for a one-dose vaccine [J&J]) <u>are not required to quarantine</u> after suspected exposure. - However, for individuals with COVID-like symptoms, regardless of their vaccination status, isolation is necessary and appropriate. |

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| 4 | Is there updated guidance on testing requirements in congregate SUD settings? | <p>For individuals with COVID-like symptoms, regardless of their vaccination status, testing is necessary and appropriate.</p> <p>Testing for asymptomatic and/or fully vaccinated individuals is not required.</p> <p>Routine surveillance testing in congregate SUD settings is also no longer required.</p> |
| 5 | Is there any guidance about being able to require vaccinations at provider sites? | <p>Vaccination has been shown to be effective, saves lives, and is one of our best tools to get past the pandemic and regain some degree of community-wide normalcy. While vaccinations are highly encouraged, decisions around whether or not employers want to mandate vaccinations in their staff are decisions that organizations need to make for themselves at the current time. While some organizations have decided to require vaccinations (with certain medical exceptions), others have not, often due to the fact that all currently available COVID vaccines are approved by the FDA under Emergency Use Authorizations (EUA) and/or because there have been varying interpretations about the legality of employers requiring COVID-19 vaccination given its EUA status. Organizations can consult legal counsel for additional guidance, as deemed helpful.</p> <p>SAPC's priority is to ensure that COVID-19 vaccination status is not a barrier to needed care. As long as provider policies do not present barriers to needed care, provider agencies can make individual decisions about how to approach their operations.</p> |
| 6 | Are SAPC providers allowed to ask a potential admission if they are vaccinated? | <p>Yes, but only to determine appropriate quarantine/isolation procedures and not to determine acceptance/denial to the program. In other words, vaccination status should not be a barrier to care.</p> |
| 7 | Even though SAPC providers cannot deny treatment for non-vaccinated people, are providers allowed to have internal policies that clients agree to follow during their admission process that limit certain activities of un-vaccinated clients when they are on- or off-site to reduce transmission risk in the interest of public safety? In this example, un-vaccinated clients would still be admitted and have access to essential services (e.g., SUD treatment, primary care or mental health appointments, etc). | <p>SAPC's priority is to ensure that COVID-19 vaccination status is not a barrier to needed care. As long as provider policies do not present barriers to needed care, provider agencies can have internal policies to best support their operations.</p> |

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| 8 | Can providers transport fully vaccinated clients in vans with masks on but not physically distanced? | Yes. While physical distancing should be practiced in all instances when possible, there may be certain instances where it is not possible. However, essential activities such as being transported to needed appointments are still required. |
| 9 | Are group sizes and Patient Education groups back to normal for congregate and outpatient programs? | Yes, groups in SUD settings are back to normal, assuming that necessary precautions (masks/social distancing) are practiced (see Section 16F on pg. 15 of the current County Health Officer Order). |
| 10 | How long will telehealth be allowed? | SAPC, in general, supports telehealth and will adhere to DHCS policies related to telehealth. SAPC's understanding is that telehealth will continue to be available in some form even beyond the pandemic period. However, there have been certain flexibilities during the pandemic that allowed various telecommunications platforms to be used, and this flexibility will likely sunset following the pandemic. Providers need to prepare for this transition and verify that the platforms they are utilizing for telehealth are fully HIPAA compliant. |